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THE DURHAM CHRONICLI

EVERY THURSDAY MORNING
AT THE CHRONICLE PRINTING HOUSE, GARAFRAXA STREET
DURHAM, ONT.

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beast who had been foremost in song and first in flight throughout the evening. Thanks to a shaking hand and a giddy head, I had already missed him twice with both barrels of my shotgun,

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THE STRANGE RIDE

OF

MORROWBIE JUKES.

BY RUDYARD KIPLING.

MANACA CARACA CA

Alive or dead-there is no other way.-Na tive Proverb.

There is, as the conjurers say, no de ception about this tale. Jukes by accident stumbled upon a village that is well known to exist, though he is the only Englishman who has been there A somewhat similar institution used to flourish on the cutskirts of Calcutta. and there is a story that if you go into the heart of Bikanir, which is in the heart of the great Indian desert, you shall come across not a village, but a town, where the dead who did not die but may not live have established their headquarters. And since it is perfectly true that in the same desert is a wonderful city where all the rich money lenders retreat after they have made their fortunes (fortunes so vast that the owners cannot trust even the strong hand of the government to protect them, but take refuge in the waterless sands) and drive sumptuous C spring barouches and buy beautiful girls and decorate their palaces with gold and ivory and Minton tiles and mother of pearl, I do not see why Jukes' tale should not be true. He is a civil engineer, with a head for plans and distances and things of that kind, and he certainly would not take the trouble to invent imaginary traps. He could earn more by doing his legitimate work. He never varies the tale in the telling and grows very hot and indignant when he thinks of the disrespectful treatment he received. He wrote this quite straightforwardly at first, but he has since

In the beginning it all arose from a slight attack of fever. My work necessitated my being in camp for some months between Pakpattan and Mubarakpur, a desolate, sandy stretch of country, as every one who has had the misfortune to go there may know. My coolies were neither more nor less exasperating than other gangs, and my work demanded sufficient attention to keep me from moping had I been inclined to so unmanly a weakness.

touched it up in places and introduced

On the 23d December, 1884, I felt a little feverish. There was a full moon at the time, and in consequence every dog near my tent was baying it. The brutes assembled in twos and threes and drove me frantic. A few days previously I had shot one loud mouthed singer and suspended his carcass in terrorem about 50 yards from my tent door. But his friends fell upon, fought for and ultimately devoured the body and, as it seemed to me, sang their hymns of hanksgiving afterward with renewed energy.

The light headedness which accompanies fever acts differently on different men. My irritation gave way after a short time to a fixed determination to slaughter one huge black and white beast who had been foremost in song and first in flight throughout the evening. Thanks to a shaking hand and a giddy head, I had already missed him twice with both barrels of my shotgun, when it struck me that my best plan would be to ride him down in the open and finish him off with a hog spear. This, of course, was merely the semidelirious notion of a fever patient, but I remember that it struck me at the time as being eminently practical and

I therefore ordered my groom to saddle Pornic and bring him round quietly to the rear of my tent. When the pony was ready, I stood at his head prepared to mount and dash out as soon as the dog should again lift up his voice. Pornic, by the way, had not been out of his pickets for a couple of days. The night air was crisp and chilly, and I was armed with a specially long and sharp pair of persuaders with which had been rousing a sluggish cob that afternoon. You will easily believe, then, that when he was let go he went quickly. In one moment, for the brute bolted as straight as a die, the tent was left far behind, and we were flying over the smooth, sandy soil at racing speed. In another we had passed the wretched dog, and I had almost forgotten why it was that I had taken horse and hog

The delirium of fever and the excitement of rapid motion through the air must have taken away the remnant of my senses. I have a faint recollection of standing upright in my stirrups and of brandishing my hog spear at the great white moon that looked down so calmly on my mad gallop and of shouting challenges to the camel thorn bushes as they whizzed past. Once or twice, I believe, I swayed forward on Pornic's neck and literally hung on by my spurs—as the marks next morning showed.

The wretched beast went forward like a thing possessed over what seemed to be a limitless expanse of moonlit sand. Next, I remember, the ground rose suddenly in front of us, and as we topped the ascent I saw the waters of the Sutlej shining like a silver bar below Then Pornic blundered heavily on his nose, and we rolled together down

some unseen slope.

I must have lost consciousness, for when I recovered I was lying on my stomach in a heap of soft white sand, and the dawn was beginning to break handy over the edge of the slope down than I had fallen. As the light grew anger I saw that I was at the bottom a horseshoe shaped crater of sand.

one side directly on to the of the Sutlei My fever had altogether left me, and, with the exception of a slight dizziness in the head, I felt

Pornic, who was standing a few yards away, was naturally a good deal exhausted, but had not hurt himself in the least. His saddle, a favorite polo one, was much knocked about and had been twisted under his belly. It took me some time to put him to rights, and in the meantime I had ample opportunities of observing the spot into which I had so foolishly dropped.

At the risk of being considered tedious
I must describe it at length, inasmuch
as an accurate mental picture of its
peculiarities will be of material assistance in enabling the reader to understand what follows.

Imagine, then, as I have said before. a horseshoe shaped crater of sand with steeply graded sand walls about 35 feet high. The slope, I fancy, must have been about 65 degrees. This crater inclosed a level piece of ground about 50 yards long by 30 at its broadest part, with a rude well in the center. Round the bottom of the crater, about three feet from the level of the ground proper ran a series of 83 semicircular, ovoid, square and multilateral holes, all about three feet at the mouth. Each hole on inspection showed that it was carefully shored internally with driftwood and bamboos, and over the mouth a wooden drip board projected, like the peak of a jockey's cap, for two feet. No sign of life was visible in these tunnels, but a most sickening stench pervaded the entire amphitheater-a stench fouler than any which my wanderings in Indian villages have introduced me to.

Having remounted Pornic, who was as anxious as I to get back to camp, rode round the base of the horseshoe to find some place whence an exit would be practicable. The inhabitants, whoever they might be, had not thought fit to put in an appearance, so I was left to my own devices. My first attempt to "rush" Pornic up the steep sand banks showed me that I had fallen into a trap exactly on the same model as that which the ant lion sets for its prey. A each step the shifting sand poured down from above in tons, and rattled on the drip boards of the holes like small shot. A couple of ineffectual charges sent us both rolling down to the bottom, half choked with the torrents of sand, and l was constrained to turn my attention to the river bank.

Here everything seemed easy enough. The sand hills ran down to the river edge, it is true, but there were plenty of shoals and shallows across which I could gallop Pornic and find my way back to terra firma by turning sharply to the right or the left. As I led Pornic over the sands I was startled by the faint pop of a rifle across the river, and at the same moment a bullet dropped with a sharp "whit" close to Pornic's head.

There was no mistaking the nature of the missile-a regulation Martini-Henry "picket." About 500 yards away a country boat was anchored in midstream, and a jet of smoke drifting away from its bows in the still morning air showed me whence the delicate attention had come. Was ever a respectable gentleman in such an impasse? The treacherous sand slope allowed no escape from a spot which I had visited most involuntarily, and promenade on the river frontage was the signal for a bombardment from some insane native in a boat. I'm afraid that I lost my temper very much

Another bullet reminded me that I had better save my breath to cool my porridge, and I retreated hastily up the sands and back to the horseshoe, where I saw that the noise of the rifle had drawn 65 human beings from the badger holes which I had up till that point supposed to be untenanted. I found myself in the midst of a crowd of spectators-about 40 men, 20 women and one child who could not have been more than 5 years old. They were all scantily clothed in that salmon colored cloth which one associates with Hindoo mendicants and at first sight gave me the impression of a band of loathsome fakirs. The filth and repulsiveness of the assembly were beyond all description, and I shuddered to think what their life in the badger holes must be.

Even in these days, when local self government has destroyed the greater part of a native's respect for a sahib, I have been accustomed to a certain amount of civility from my inferiors, and on approaching the crowd naturally expected that there would be some recognition of my presence. As a matter of fact there was, but it was by no

means what I had looked for. The ragged crew actually laughed at me-such laughter I hope I may never hear again. They cackled, yelled, whistled and howled as I walked into their midst, some of them literally throwing themselves down on the ground in convulsions of unholy mirth. In a moment I had let go Pornic's head, and, irritated beyond expression at the morning's adventure, commenced cuffing those nearest to me with all the force I could. The wretches dropped under my blows like ninepins, and the laughter gave place to wails for mercy, while those yet untouched clasped me round the

knees, imploring me in all sorts of un-

In the tumult and just when I was feeling very much ashamed of myself for having thus easily given way to my temper a thin. high voice murmured in English from behind my shoulder "Sahib! Sahib! Do you not know me? Sahib, it is Gunga Dass, the telegraph master."

I spun round quickly and faced the

Gunga Dass (I have, of course, no hesitation in mentioning the man's real name) I had known four years before as a Deccanee Brahman lent by the Punjab government to one of the Khalsia states. He was in charge of a branch telegraph office there, and when I had last met him was a jovial, full stomached, portly government servant, with a marvelous capacity for making bad puns in English, a peculiarity which made me remember him long after I had forgotten his services to me in his official capacity. It is seldom that a Hindoo makes English puns.

Now, however, the man was changed beyond all recognition. Caste mark, stomach, slate colored continuations and unctuous speech were all gone. I looked at a withered skeleton, turban-less and almost naked, with long, matted hair and deep set, codfish eyes. But for a crescent shaped scar on the left cheek, the result of an accident for which I was responsible, I should never have known him. But it was indubitably Gunga Dass and—for this I was thankful—an English speaking native, who might at least tell me the meaning of all that I had gone through that day.

The crowd retreated to some distance as I turned toward the miserable figure and ordered him to show me some method of escaping from the crater. He held a freshly plucked crow in his hand and in reply to my question climbed slowly on a platform of sand which ran in front of the holes and commenced lighting a fire-there in silence. Dried bents, sand poppies and driftwood burn quickly, and I derived much consolation from the fact that he lit them with an ordinary sulphur match. When they were in a bright glow and the crow was neatly spitted in front thereof, Gunga Dass began without a word of preamble:

"There are only two kinds of men, sar, the alive and the dead. When you are dead, you are dead, but when you are alive, you live." Here the crow demanded his attention for an instant as it twirled before the fire in danger of being burned to a cinder. "If you die at home, and do not die when you come to the ghat to be burned, you come here."

The nature of the reeking village was made plain now, and all that I had known or read of the grotesque and the horrible paled before the fact just communicated by the ex-Brahman. Sixteen years ago, when I first landed in Bombay, I had been told by a wandering Armenian of the existence, somewhere in India, of a place to which such Hindoos as had the misfortune to recover from trance or catalepsy were conveyed and kept, and I recollect laughing heartily at what I was then pleased to consider a traveler's tale. Sitting at the bottom of the sand trap, the memory of Watson's hotel, with its swinging punkahs, white robed attendants and the sallow faced Armenian, rose up in my mind as vividly as a photograph, and I burst into a loud fit of laughter. The contrast was too absurd!

Gunga Dass, as he bent over the unclean bird, watched me curiously. Hindoos seldom laugh, and his surroundings were not such as to move Gunga Dass to any undue excess of hilarity He removed the crow solemnly from the wooden spit and as solemnly devoured it. Then he continued his story, which I give in his own words:

"In epidemics of the cholera you are carried to be burned almost before you are dead. When you come to the river side, the cold air perhaps makes you alive, and then, if you are only little alive, mud is put on your nose and mouth and you die conclusively. If you are rather more alive, more mud is put. but if you are too lively they let you go and take you away. I was too lively and made protestation with anger against the indignities that they endeavored to press upon me. In those days I was Brahman and proud man Now I am dead man and eat"-here he eyed the well gnawed breastbone with the first sign of emotion that I had seen in him since we met-"crows and other things. They took me from my sheets when they saw that I was too lively and gave me medicines for one week, and I survived successfully. Then they sent me by rail from my place to Okara station, with a man to take care of me, and at Okara station we met two other men, and they conducted we three on camels in the night from Okara station to this place, and they propelled me from the top to the bottom, and the other two succeeded, and I have been here ever since, two and a half years. Once I was Brahman and proud man. and now I eat crows."

"There is no way of getting out?"
"None of what kind at all. When I first came, I made experiments frequently, and all the others also, but we have always succumbed to the sand which is precipitated upon our heads."

"But surely," I broke in at this point, "the river front is open, and it is worth while dodging the bullets, while at night"—

I had already matured a rough plan of escape which a natural instinct of selfishness forbade me sharing with Gunga Dass. He, however, divined my unspoken thought almost as soon as it was formed and, to my intense astonishment, gave vent to a long low chuckle of derision—the laughter, be it understood, of a superior or at least of an

"You will not"—he had dropped the sar completely after his opening sentence—"make any escape that way. But you can try. I have tried. Once

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20th. 1yr-pd. DURHAM, ONT.

only."

The sensation of nameless terror and abject fear which I had in vain at-

tempted to strive against overmastered

me completely. My long fast-it was now close upon 10 o'clock, and I had eaten nothing since tiffin on the previous day-combined with the violent and unnatural agitation of the ride, had exhausted me, and I verily believe that for a few minutes I acted as one mad. I hurled myself against the pitiless sand slope. I ran round the base of the crater, blaspheming and praying by turns. I crawled out among the sedges of the river front, only to be driven back each time in an agony of nervous dread by the rifle bullets which cut up the sand round me, for I dared not face the death of a mad dog among that hideous

crowd, and finally fell, spent and rav-

ing, at the curb of the well. No one

had taken the slightest notice of an ex-

hibition which makes me blush hotly

even when I think of it now. Two or three men trod on my panting body as they drew water, but they were evidently used to this sort of thing and had no time to waste upon me. The situation was humiliating. Gunga Dass, indeed, when he had banked the embers of his fire with sand, was at some pains to throw half a cupful of fetid water over my head, an attention for which I could have fallen on my knees and thanked him, but he was laughing all the while in the same mirthless, wheezy key that greeted me on my first attempt to force the shoals. And so in a semicomatose condition I lay till noon. Then, being only a man after all, I felt hungry and intimated as much to Gunga Dass, whom I had begun to regard as my natural protector. Following the impulse of the outer world when dealing with natives, I put my hand into my pocket and drew out 4 annas. The absurdity of the gift struck me at once, and I was about to replace the money.

Gunga Dass, however, was of a different opinion. "Give me the money," said he; "all you have, or I will get help, and we will kill you!" All this as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

A Briton's first impulse, I believe, is to guard the contents of his pockets, but a moment's reflection convinced me of the futility of differing with the one man who had it in his power to make me comfortable and with whose help it was possible that I might eventually escape from the crater. I gave him all the money in my possession-9 rupees, 8 annas and 5 pie-for I always keep small change as backsheesh when I am in camp. Gunga Dass clutched the coins, and hid them at once in his ragged loin cloth, his expression changing to something diabolical as he looked round to assure himself that no one had

"Now I will give you something to eat," said he.

observed us.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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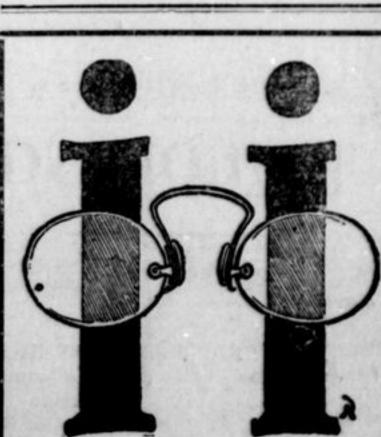
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